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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to increase the number of elementary school students eligible for placement in a gifted program by improving the prescreening process. Major goals were to: (1) improve teachers' ability to identify giftedness in children; (2) improve the referral rate for gifted screening; and (3) increase the identification and placement rate of children into the gifted program to the expected level. A list of characteristics of giftedness was developed and a series of meetings with a total of 23 teachers provided training in the recognition of potentially eligible students. A parent workshop was also held to educate parents about characteristics of gifted students as well as the screening, evaluation, and placement process. Analysis of results indicated that teachers made more than double the number of referrals compared to the previous 3 years and that all teachers who received the training made nominations of students for screening. The number of students ultimately qualified approached, but did not reach, the two percent goal. Appendices include the gifted characteristics checklist, teacher pre-test and post-test, a sample screening and evaluation log, and a summary of the identification process. (Contains 38 references.) (DB)

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Increasing the Number of Elementary Students Found Eligible for Placement in a Gifted Program by Improving the Prescreening Process Through Increased Training for School Staff and Parent Education

by

James J. Spratt

Cluster 59

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by James J. Spratt, Jr. under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

November 7, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

Mary Staggs Ed.D.
Mary Staggs, Ed.D., Adviser

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To the principal, staff, parents and students of the school at which this practicum was done.

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To my wife, Linda, who makes it all worthwhile.

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ABSTRACT

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This practicum was designed to increase the number of elementary school students who were eligible for placement in the gifted program by improving the prescreening process. The major goals were to improve teacher's ability to identify giftedness in children, to improve the referral rate for gifted screening and to increase the identification and placement rate of children into the gifted program to the level that is commonly expected.

The writer developed a list of characteristics of giftedness in children and trained teachers to recognize these. A parent workshop was also held to educate parents about these same characteristics as well as the whole screening, evaluation and placement process.

An analysis of the results indicated that although teachers did not show an improvement in their ability to identify giftedness in students, as measured by a pre- and posttest, they did make appropriate referrals. The number of referrals for screening doubled as compared to the previous three years. The number of students appropriately identified fell just short of the expected outcome but brought the population of identified students over the recognized rate. Teachers and parents reported appreciation for being more involved and knowledgeable about gifted children.

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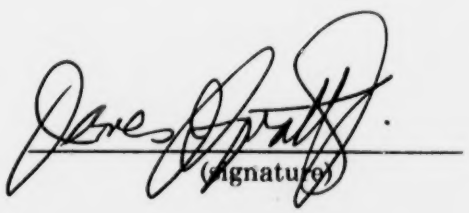
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Chapter I

Introduction

Description of Community

The school district where the writer is employed is a large county system in the central part of a southeastern state of the United States. There are 122 schools in the district at the present time. Because of the constant increase in the population of the community three more schools are being planned for construction each year for the next five years and three are in construction presently.

At present there are 85 elementary schools, 21 middle schools, 21 high schools and four alternative/exceptional education centers. There are 42 elementary schools on a variety of year round sessions. The entire school system serves 116,000 students from prekindergarten to twelfth grade. Approximately 13,000 adults attend vocational/technical programs. There are two satellite schools in office buildings for children whose parents work within the sites. Almost 80% of the graduating seniors expect to enter college and 13% expect to attend vocational/technical schools. The system provides educational programs to students from 174 countries who speak 56 languages.

Five additional schools have opened in the past six months to serve troubled students in secondary alternative programs. These centers are for students who

have been considered for expulsion for their behavior difficulties, but do not qualify for exceptional education programs.

The school that this practicum focused on serves approximately 550 students. The community is very rural. It is situated in the northwestern part of the county. There is no clearly defined main street, only a four lane highway that runs through the approximate center of the communities' boundaries. There is a small cluster of convenience stores, a truck stop, a post office, a bank, three restaurants that serve locally popular food and a fire station. The community that the school serves is spread over approximately forty square miles of rolling hills that are dotted by small lakes. Part of the community is on the shores of a 31,000 acre lake. The lake once supported many families because of its rich stock of game fish but muck farming and businesses that produced numerous chemicals have all but killed the wildlife that inhabited the lake.

The area was settled in the 1850's by business people from the North who were looking for winter homes and a home for their new businesses. Cattle ranching, citrus and winter crops such as watermelon, celery, corn and leaf vegetables once made a handsome living for the owners of the ranches and farms. Frost and other natural disasters have eliminated all cattle ranching and most of the citrus groves.

Because of the climate and the crops grown in the area, the population has always been mobile. Approximately 4,000 people live within the area served by the school. Many of the residents are migrant farm workers employed by the corporately owned farms. The remainder of the population are retired people and

those who can trace their ancestry back to the original settlers. Most people work for the large farms. The remainder work for small, family owned businesses such as the citrus and fern growers. A small number of people work in the tourist resort areas thirty miles away. Approximately 50% of the people rent or own homes that are constructed on site. The remaining 50% live in mobile homes, either in mobile home parks or on farm properties owned by their employers. Because of the low incomes generated by the local businesses, almost half of the families receive some form of public assistance.

The student population is 72% White, 15% Black, 12% Hispanic and 1% Asian. During the past school year, approximately 46% of the students moved. This is due primarily to the occupations of their parents, migrant workers, and their need to follow the crops that they tend.

The same number of students received free or reduced lunches, putting their parents income below the poverty line. (The county system has 12% on free or reduced lunches.) Even with the transience of the population and the high degree of poverty the attendance rate is 93% and less than 1% of the students are habitually truant. Less than one half of one percent of the students were suspended either in or out of school.

Two percent of the students are in programs for children with limited English ability and 14% receive federal compensatory education. Students in special education programs make up 15% of the student population. There are 11.5% of the students in programs with mild disabilities (specific learning disabilities, emotionally handicapped, visually handicapped, auditorally handicapped and

physically handicapped). Approximately 1% of the students are in programs for the mentally handicapped and severely emotionally disturbed. One percent of the students are in programs for children who are identified as being gifted.

The average class size is 23, excluding exceptional education classes. There are 29 teachers and 23 support staff people such as classroom aides, secretaries, clerks and custodians. There are also as many adult volunteers that work with teachers and students.

The teaching staff is composed of 28 females and one male. Ethnically they are 87% White and 13% Black. Bachelors' degrees are held by 72%; 28% have Masters degrees. There is one first year teacher, ten teachers with one to three years of experience, two with four to nine years of experience, four with ten to nineteen years of experience and thirteen with more than twenty years experience.

On a test comparing fourth graders at the school with a national sample, 39% scored above the national middle score in reading and 59% scored above the national middle score in math. This is four points below the norm for the district in reading and eight points above the norm for the district in math.

The Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is employed in the school as a school psychologist. He serves the school one day a week, on site, and is at three other schools one day each. The remaining day is spent at the office, writing reports, consulting with colleagues on cases, conferring with parents, teachers and administrators by phone and doing professional reading to keep abreast of the field of school psychology.

At the school the writer serves as a member of the Educational Planning Team (EPT) that reviews parents' and teachers' concerns regarding students' educational needs. The team is composed of the child's classroom teacher, the guidance counselor, the school social worker, the curriculum resource teacher, the principal, any special area teachers that have contact with the child, the parent or guardian and any agency representatives that provide services to the child or family.

As a school psychologist the writer is responsible for all psychoeducational evaluations done at the school as well as at other facilities that provide educational programs for children in the school's encatchment area. He is also available to parents and staff on a consultative basis for information and referral for other than educational concerns, such as family problems. Referrals are also made for medical intervention and counseling. The inservice training of staff members is another responsibility of the writer. Training areas include recognition of handicapping conditions, abuse, federal regulations that effect education and behavioral modification techniques. The writer serves as a member of a student assistance team designed to identify and respond to short term crisis situations affecting students and their families. The writer also serves as a member of the staffing committee that determines the eligibility and placement of students into exceptional educational programs based upon evaluations done by the writer, exceptional education teachers, the school social worker and the other professionals.

Chapter II

Study of the Problem

Problem Description

The present pre-referral process does not identify all children who are gifted. Children who are gifted are not being identified nor placed into the program for gifted children. Referrals for screening for the full evaluation process are inappropriate.

According to the Staffing Procedures Manual (Chapman, 1993),

> A student is eligible for special programs for the gifted if the student demonstrates the following: 1) Superior intellectual development....2) Obtain a ranking of 3 or 4 on a majority (16 or more) of characteristics of gifted children and....3) Evidence that the student's educational needs cannot be met within the regular program. (p.148).

The process of determining which students should be referred for consideration in the gifted program begins with a screening process (Appendix A). This process is begun twice a year with a memo to all school principals advising them of specific start up dates, prescreening guidelines and forms to report the results of screening and individual evaluations.

During prescreening parents and teachers may nominate, for screening, those students who have not been individually evaluated by a psychologist. The school is responsible for determining, through examination of past records and present performance, indications of superior intellectual ability. Information that can be used includes group achievement test scores, grades and anecdotal information from teachers, counselors, principals, parents and students.

Next, a list of students nominated for screening is compiled. In the past anyone could nominate a student for screening and at times large numbers of students were nominated by a few teachers while other teachers did not nominate any students. In an attempt to deal with the imbalance of nominations from teachers, the writer has attempted to prescreen students in two ways.

The first attempt involved reviewing the records of each student nominated to determine the rationale for the nomination. In many cases students were nominated because they had good grades and were well behaved. They did not, however, exhibit superior scores on achievement tests. At times their scores on achievement tests were average and it appeared that they were working above expectation. Although they were every teacher's dream because of their effort and grades, they were not of superior intellect. The writer would then interview each teacher to discern how each child was seen as being gifted. Most teachers did not have any clear cut criteria.

The second approach involved attempting to review the cumulative records of all students for possible evidence of giftedness. Although this was sometimes fruitful, it became very time consuming trying to check all 550 students' records,

especially since new students were constantly arriving while others left. With all the other responsibilities of the writer it became apparent that trying to find gifted students through this method would be a full time job and not as productive as other possible solutions.

While attempting each of the above solutions, the writer met with each teacher to review those items that suggested giftedness in the children that were referred. With some teachers this was productive because some used this information in subsequent referrals. Other teachers did not appear to understand "giftedness" as reflected in their continued referrals of students who did not get beyond the group screening. Some students got scores that were average at best. Usually the teacher's focus was on less tangible "gut feelings" of brightness rather than actual gifted characteristics that were discussed.

Regardless of what method the writer used to determine which of the prescreening students should be screened other weaknesses in the process existed. The first was that even though a number of teachers were referring children, an even larger number, 80%, were not. In the four years that the writer has been at this school a majority of teachers did not make any referrals. Even when the writer discovered, through reviewing student records, that children might be good candidates, the student's teacher did not refer them. It was then necessary to request that some other staff person refer the student for screening. This resulted, at times, in negative responses from the student's teacher for having done an "end-run" around them.

Another weakness in the process was that there was no readily available written list of gifted characteristics for teachers to refer to when they were considering students for referral. This was a double edged sword because without such a list students who exhibited these characteristics were not recognized and, therefore, not referred while others who do not exhibit the characteristics were referred.

There is a checklist that is used as part of the eligibility staffing and relates to specific expectations of the gifted program (Appendix B). It was designed to help create individual educational plans and does not discriminate well between students who are high achievers, gifted or just average. Because of this it is not used for any other purpose but eligibility staffings.

Another weakness was that there is a succession of individuals from the referring teacher to the writer who made decisions in isolation of one another. The teacher determined whom she was going to refer based upon her perception of giftedness. The same was true of parents, principals and guidance counselors, as well as the writer.

Achievement tests that reflect the academic ability of students were used by the writer to determine if children were gifted. Although there can be conflicting points of view about the use of such scores for this purpose there was a related problem with reliance on the test scores. Within the past two years the district has abandoned testing second graders. Second, because so many students (46%) move out of the district throughout the year, testing was often accomplished when students were out of the district. In addition, there has been no achievement

testing on either kindergarten or first graders in the past five years. As a result, there was little group testing done on which to base decisions about students' learning.

The present pre-referral process does not identify all children who are potentially gifted. Referrals for screening for the full evaluation process are inappropriate, based upon students previous and present performance in school.

Problem Documentation

The presence of the problem within the writer's work setting became evident over a period of years from 1989 through 1993. Although the school population is of average size, the number of students who qualified for the gifted program is below that expected for the number of students in the school. By definition, children scoring in the gifted range of intelligence should make up two percent of the school's population. There were six students in the school who were in the gifted program. These students comprise only 1% of the population of the school. During the years 1990-1993, the referral rate for gifted screening averaged 4% of the school population. The rate of qualifying for full evaluation for the gifted program for this period was also 4%. McCune (1984) reported that the rate of giftedness in small, rural schools is proportionately as high as in larger schools. The need for gifted programs in rural schools is greater because there are usually fewer cultural experiences available to rural students. These experiences are necessary so that students can recognize the opportunities that could be available to them by continuing their education beyond high school.

The results of qualifying for gifted screening and testing were obtained by reviewing the writer's case logs that the writer maintained for the years 1990 through the present (1994). In addition, anecdotal comments from teachers about the low number of students in the school's gifted program as compared to other schools in the district created the spark that suggested that the problem existed. Teachers reported that they could not understand how children were not qualifying for the gifted program when they were such excellent students. Guskin, Peng and Majd-Jubbari (1988) reported that most children are taught by teachers who have no special training in gifted education. As a result they may lack the information necessary to identify gifted children when they teach them. Gagne (1993) pointed out that even when teachers are given specific criteria to evaluate children's abilities they may not be able to identify gifted children. He proposed that some children do not exhibit skills associated with giftedness in the school environment. Cultural differences, as presented by Florey, Nottle and Dorf (1986) raised these same issues.

Reviewing the scores achieved on the screening instrument used, the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test, Sixth Edition.(OLSAT), resulted in very interesting information. In the past three years 81 students were screened, but only 12 passed. The 81 students screened had already been prescreened from a list of 185 students submitted by teachers and reviewed by the writer. The cutoff score to pass screening is 125. Scores achieved by students ranged from 75 to 140. Table 1 shows the variation of scores for the students screened.

Table 1

OLSAT Test Scores (1990-1993)

Range of Scores	Number of Students
75-79	3
80-89	4
90-99	14
100-109	28
110-119	17
120-129	10
130-139	4
140+	1

Approximately 44% of the students who were prescreened were permitted to go on for screening. Of those screened only 15% passed. Considering these figures it appeared that either the prescreening or screening methods that were in use are not very effective in distinguishing between those who are gifted and those who are not. Furthermore, with the information that teachers were using to make referrals it appeared that approximately 50% of the time (42 out of 81) students of average ability (scores of 90 - 109) were being seen as potentially gifted by teachers. Approximately 9% (7 out of 81) of the time students in the borderline to low average (75-89) of ability were referred. Teachers identified 33% (27 out of 81) of the

students who were of high average to superior (110-129) ability. Only 6% (5 out of 81) of the students were in the very superior range (130+). An accuracy rate of 6% for prescreening does not speak well for the process.

Causative Analysis

The difficulties of identifying children who are gifted may be related to the definition of giftedness as used by the educational community. Gardner (1983) reported that many people believe that all abilities are interrelated to a great extent. They also believe that these abilities are clustered around an individual's intellect that can be measured by intelligence tests.

Giftedness is expected to be present when a student shows superior intellectual ability exhibited on an individual intelligence test. The student must score two standard deviations or more above average, or roughly within the upper two percentile. This means that statistically a teacher stands a 2 in 100 chance of having a student who is gifted. Since few elementary teachers, except for special area teachers, meet 100 students in one year, they probably have little opportunities to meet gifted children. The recognition that these children are gifted may be difficult because of lack of contact.

Six additional factors may be possible causes of the poor rate of identification of gifted children. There is a lack of inservice training for teachers, principals and even school psychologists about the characteristics that gifted children exhibit. Teachers refer students who do not meet eligibility requirements and do not refer those who are gifted. A related factor is that classroom teachers do not demonstrate

an understanding of the relationship between intelligence and giftedness. Rosenthal, DeMers, Stilwell and Graybeal (1983) reported that creative thinking is considered one of the various types of giftedness. There is, however, a weak relationship between intelligence, creative thinking and how children score on intelligence tests. Approximately 60% of the students referred by teachers over a three year period were of borderline to low average ability.

A third series of factors that affect the problem includes the expanding curriculum that teachers are expected to present to students; overcrowded classrooms and student behavior problems. All of these issues have an impact on the classroom teacher on a daily basis and result in less time for teachers to attend to individual student differences. Those students that stand out most often in large classrooms are those who disrupt and impede the class because of inappropriate behavior. Students who complete their work, help others, and do not cause the teacher behavior problems are more often seen as gifted by teachers and are referred. Those students who are behavior problems regardless of their true intellectual ability are referred as behaviorally disordered. They are not seen as learning disabled or gifted, as is often later determined by evaluation. Ford and Harris (1992) report that gifted African American children are not recognized as gifted because they act out, drop out and refuse to work. They behave this way to maintain their social status with peers.

A fourth factor contributing to the problem is the limited training time available for teachers. The major emphasis of each school day is to provide appropriate educational experiences for all children. Society is making more and

more demands on educators to expand their responsibility to train children beyond the three R's of the past. New curriculum materials and methods are constantly being introduced that require training time. Teachers are required to be vigilant for signs of abuse, neglect and medical problems that affect learning. Multi-cultural issues and their effects on education also take training time from the educational day. Explanations of giftedness usually take the back seat to much larger issues that affect the entire school.

A fifth factor that affects the problem is the limited period during which pre-referral screening and evaluations are done. Identification of children who are gifted is not a high priority throughout the school year and as such over the past ten years the district has relegated gifted testing to a portion of the school year when other more immediate demands on staff psychologists are diminishing. Because the incidence rate of giftedness is low and special education teachers in this area are few, the district attempts to limit hiring of these teachers to the beginning of the school year when class sizes can be determined by the number of students who recently qualified for gifted programs. As a result, the majority of students are tested during the summer months. This is also done during this time because multiple evaluations can be done in one day by the psychologist because most schools are not in session. Finally, parents of gifted children have been notoriously vigilant in having their children evaluated and are very cooperative in bringing their children to school during the summer for the evaluation.

The final factor that affects the problem of identifying children who are gifted is the mobility of students in and out of the school. Approximately 46% of the

students move out of the school within the school year. Some students return to the school within the same year, but because other students fill their spaces in the class and social, ethnic and gender ratios are used to keep classes balanced, they do not necessarily return to their original teacher. In addition, there are often multiple moves in and out of the school within the year by the same students. This not only affects the ability of the teacher to recognize the superior intellectual abilities of gifted children, but also creates attachment and social identification problems for children, masking their abilities behind behavior problems. Both Drons (1989) and DeMeis and Stearns (1992) point out the need to identify early those children who have special needs, including giftedness. If these children are not identified early, it is possible that they will develop behavioral problems that make identification of their underlying skills difficult.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The identification of children who are gifted is a controversial issue because of the methods of evaluation that are employed. Researchers disagree about what instruments to use and how effective they are in identifying children who are of superior intellect. Wright (1983) did research on the usefulness of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) in screening children for gifted programs. Although it was effective, when compared to the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) when used with an average population, it was marginally effective with children of superior ability. Mills and Barnett (1992) evaluated the Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT) and found it to be a rigorous

test. It was an effective instrument to identify fifth and sixth grade students who had exceptional verbal and quantitative reasoning abilities. These students would most likely profit from challenging academic experiences such as those that were present in gifted programs. The test was of limited use, however, because no research was done on its efficacy with students lower than fifth grade.

Harrison, Ittenbach and Taylor (1988) explored the use of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC) with intellectually gifted children. They found that the results of their research differed from those of previous researchers in that there was no characteristic profile on the K-ABC for children referred for gifted programs.

Some instruments are limited in their usefulness while others give different results for the same populations because of renorming and updating them. Milrod and Rescorla (1991) found that the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence-Revised (WPPSI-R) yielded lower scores for preschoolers with high intelligence quotients (IQs) than did its predecessor, the WPPSI. As a result, children who would have qualified for a program that used the WPPSI the year before as its testing instrument would not qualify when the WPPSI-R was used in subsequent years. Some states retest every year as a means of requalifying for gifted programs. Theoretically a child could enter a program one year and be exited the next because of the difference in scores between the WPPSI and the WPPSI-R.

Kramer, Shanks, Markley and Ryabik (1983) looked at the use of abbreviated forms of the WISC-R and their possible use in screening children for gifted programs. They cautioned against their use for this purpose because the results did

not reflect a full representation of the gifted population. One of their biggest concerns had to do with the best combination of subtests to be used to yield the most accurate results. When they did their research there was discord among researchers how to arrive at this "best fit" without searching for those subtest combinations that gave different psychologists the results they wanted.

Drons (1989) focused on the difficulty of screening children for gifted programs. He cites a difference of 30 points between students' performance on group tests as opposed to individually administered tests. This variability in performance between the two types of tests underscores the concern about how tests are designed and used. The Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students (SAGES) was designed to do just what the title proposes. Johnsen and Corn (1987) looked at the instrument and indicated that it lacked the ability to differentiate between average and gifted children. They commented further that the need to have another screening device was questionable because most schools already effectively identify candidates for individual evaluations through teacher recommendation and achievement test scores. The picture was further confounded by their report that there was no definition or standardized list of characteristics of giftedness. The construct that the SAGES was measuring was, in their view, of questionable validity.

The screening device presently in use in the writer's school and district, as well as in surrounding areas, is the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test-Sixth Edition (OLSAT). It, and earlier versions, have been in use for at least the past twelve years. The upper cutoff score for screening is a point of discussion among different

school districts as to which cutoff is more able to predict the highest incidence of success on individually administered IQ tests. Avant and O'Neal (1986) indicate that the correlation between the WISC-R and OLSAT are significant for all groups of students, except those at the upper ends of the test, the gifted population. This group produced the lowest correlation. In addition, different predictability rates existed for White and Black students.

The issue of populations within the gifted population is another area of research. Burns, Mathews and Mason (1990) indicate that preschoolers, children three to five, present a challenge to those who attempt to identify the gifted in this group. They report that appropriate screening instruments are lacking for these students but checklists are available for this purpose. A problem with these lists, however, is that they do not accurately discriminate between gifted and bright children. They also pointed out the lack of correlation between IQs for three to five year olds and their performance on IQ tests when they are older.

The use of three subtests of the WISC-R as a screening device was examined by Fineman and Carran (1986). Using scores from the Vocabulary, Digit Span and Similarities subtests they determined that this method was a cost effective and reliable method to screen students who were potentially gifted.

According to Achey and Woods (1988) the WISC-R was the preferred device in determining giftedness although the K-ABC was also used as an adjunct to the WISC-R. This was done despite the researchers concerns about bias in the WISC-R. Florey et al. (1986) looked at alternate methods of evaluation for use with Native Americans because of the behavioral characteristics of Native Americans. Although

not condemning specific instruments entirely, they recommended the use of a variety of instruments to fairly evaluate this population.

The recognition of giftedness by peers was researched by Gagne, Begin and Talbot (1993). They found that of all the aptitudes scored by peers, superior intellectual ability was the most often recognized. Gifted underachievers were not so easily identified by peers. This questions the issue of how well children can detect giftedness in their peers. Nevertheless, there are numerous forms of peer nominations that are being used for the identification of gifted and talented students. Some focus on only one aspect of giftedness, such as intellect, while others are more broad based in their view of this area of exceptional education.

Parent's abilities to identify characteristics of giftedness in their children is an area that Scott, Perou, Urbano, Hogan and Gold (1992) suggest as a possible way to increase the number of referrals for gifted screenings. They suggest that, at present, minority children are underrepresented in gifted programs because their parents are not as active in requesting evaluations for their children for gifted programs. There was a great deal of agreement among the parents groups surveyed as to what constituted giftedness. Although there were some minor differences between what the White parents viewed as being characteristic of gifted children and what the Black and Hispanic parents viewed, these differences had to do mostly with the number of characteristics each group spontaneously produced.

Louis and Lewis (1992) concurred with the research of Scott et al. (1992) in their findings that parents of four year olds could see giftedness in their children with a degree of accuracy exceeding 60%. They were also able to produce a list of

characteristics that accurately reflected giftedness. Parents reported that memory and abstract thinking were important aspects of giftedness that they recognized in their children.

The majority of referrals for gifted screening come as a result of teachers' perceptions of the characteristics that gifted children exhibit. Guskin et al. (1988) reported that experienced teachers and undergraduate students of education were able to create similar lists of ability that reflect giftedness and talent. They created lists that were consistent with Gardner's (1983) view of multiple independent intelligences. Guskin, Peng and Simon (1992) concluded much the same thing regarding teachers' awareness of multiple intelligences and their impact on how teachers responded to students based upon these perceptions. Teachers did not respond differently to students with high abilities, based upon race, but they did respond differently based on gender and social class. Teachers who had experience with gifted education reacted differently to gifted children than did their colleagues who had no experience with giftedness.

Beyond the issue of recognition of characteristic of giftedness by peers, teachers and parents, are the differences in how the various social and racial groups manifest giftedness. Ford and Harris (1992) report that African Americans were underrepresented by 30% to 50% in gifted programs while being over-represented 40% to 50% more in other exceptional education programs. This may be based in the bind that many Black students find themselves of deciding between peer relationships and exhibiting their giftedness. The cultural differences that exist between Black and White students may also account for the underrepresentation of

Black students in gifted programs. Black students act out behaviorally to maintain their relationships with peers rather than succeed academically. Although a majority of the Black fifth and sixth grade students studied reported that school was important, almost 58% of the males and 42% of the females admitted their effort was low. Looking at grade point averages, gifted Black females had the highest grades while gifted Black males had the lowest. Non-gifted Black females and Black males scored between the gifted groups. Exhibition of one's abilities was a negative belief among gifted Black males but not among gifted Black females, as represented by their grades. Their overt statements were not consistent with their performance as they reported that school was important and peer pressure did not affect their performance.

A State Department of Education planning guide (1992), reviewed the issue of under-representation of racial and ethnic minorities, those from lower socioeconomic groups and those of limited English proficiency. Because of the differences in culture children from these groups did not exhibit the characteristics traditionally recognized in gifted students.

Florey et al. (1986) cite major cultural difference between Native Americans and mainstream society that affects the referral rates of Native American children to gifted programs. Among these differences is the Native American's reluctance to perform competitively, their lack of practice in test taking, the lack of development of rapport with an examiner from a different culture, and the lack of understanding of the importance of the speed oriented aspects of the test. In addition, because of differences in the structures of Native American language, student responses tend to

be short and lacking in detail. Because of language these children may not have the exposure at home to all the verbal experiences of their English speaking peers. In addition, the cultural experiences of Native American students are usually not reflective of the mainstream culture. The same may be said of students from culturally deprived families where excellence is not valued, but repressed, and the good of the whole group takes precedence over the needs of the individual.

Gagne (1993) points out the differences in how males and females exhibit abilities. Not surprisingly boys were seen as exhibiting better skills in athletics while girls were seen as better in the arts and social-emotional endeavors. There were differences in how boys performed on tests of math and science while girls did better on language arts tests. Boys were perceived as being more gifted and talented than girls, as viewed by both peers and teachers. These perceived differences were reflective of the behaviors of students in school and, therefore, expected to be legitimate observations.

Guskin et al. (1992) report that teachers view students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as less capable in a number of areas including confidence and popularity. Blacks and lower socioeconomic class students were perceived as being less attractive. Males were viewed as less helpful than females. Males from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were less attentive than those from other groups. With respect to how teachers made suggestions about special programming needs of students there were also differences. When teachers perceived that students had superior verbal and analytic skills they recommended advanced levels of materials. Students who were seen as having advanced social or motor skills were not

recommended for advanced programs of study in these areas. The prediction of success of students with differing abilities was also different. Students who had skills in social, verbal or analytic areas were seen as being successful in the future. Those who had skills in the creative arts or motor areas were not perceived as being successful in the future. Gagne (1993), in referring to the differences manifested by males and females, cautions against educators viewing these differences as a means to establish quotas with respect to gender and ability.

Crombie, Bouffard-Bouchard and Schneider (1992) examined the possibility that a bias existed against girls, in favor of boys, concerning referral and enrollment in gifted programs. Although there were no overall differences there were specific ones. Girls did not qualify at a higher rate than boys but enrolled at a lower rate, once they did quality. Of the five districts that were reviewed only one referred boys at a higher rate than girls.

Achey and Woods (1988) indicated in their research that minority students were experiencing bias because teachers were unaware of the behavioral characteristics of minority students who were gifted. Other issues were probably causing minority under-representation in gifted programs including the possibility that their parents are not as well informed about giftedness. In addition, the test instruments used could be biased and the definition of giftedness in use was too limited in its scope.

Ford and Harris (1992) point to the tendency on the part of educators to label minority students as underachievers when they do not meet teacher expectations.

Social, cultural and psychological factors may work against minority students believing that they can be successful educationally, and as a result, they are not.

When different tests are reviewed for the bias that they may contain interesting results are reported. Ortiz and Volkoff (1989) reported that the WISC-R was the most successful test in identifying Hispanic students for gifted and talented programs. Kaufman (1993), however, suggests that to more fairly evaluate minority, culturally disadvantaged and learning disabled students an alternate IQ test, based on the WISC-III should be developed. Post and Mitchell (1993), in working with both minority and culturally disadvantaged students suggest that the Performance IQ of the WISC-III produced a more dependable evaluation of these students' capabilities as opposed to the Full Scale IQ.

Chapter III

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The major goal of this practicum was to accurately identify the students who meet criteria for placement in the gifted program through improving the pre-referral process. Related to this goal was an expectation that teachers and parents would exhibit an understanding of the characteristics of children who are gifted.

Expected Outcomes

As a result of applying specific solutions to the problems related to identifying potentially gifted students in an elementary school, the following outcomes were expected:

1. Teachers would increase their ability to identify giftedness in children.
2. At least 5% of the school population would be referred for gifted screening.
3. The number of students appropriately identified and placed in the gifted program would reflect at least 2% of the total school population.

Measurement of Outcomes

To show that the expected outcomes had been met, data was collected from the Gifted Screening and Evaluation Logs used by the writer in the district in which he is employed (Appendix C). This is a form that reports the name, sex, race, grade, screening score on the OLSAT, if the student passed or failed the screening and the results of individual intelligence test scores for those students who were deemed eligible for individualized testing. Under certain circumstances the school psychologist at each school may elect to evaluate students who have not met the lower cutoff score of 125 on the OLSAT. These circumstances include evidence that the student was not able to perform at their ability level because of illness, emotional distress or poor testing conditions. It is the discretion of the school psychologist to override the results of screening based upon evidence presented by either parents or teachers. It is also possible that screening can be waived if the student cannot fairly be administered the test because of limited English proficiency or a physical handicap, such as a visual impairment, that impedes his performance. Under these circumstances an alternate form of the IQ test will be used or only certain portions of the test employed to determine eligibility.

Screening is done by the school guidance counselor under the supervision of the writer. Test security is strictly maintained and the scoring sheets are not available at the school. Test forms are delivered to the school by the writer one to two days before the screening. The instructions are reviewed with the guidance counselor. Small groups of students from each grade level are tested and only enough test forms for each grade level are available at the school.

Scoring is done by the writer at his office. Specific scores are not reported, either to parents or teachers, to reduce comparisons about perceived abilities. Those who pass are notified orally of the results and parents are contacted to determine if they wish to go on with the individual IQ test used for determining eligibility in the gifted program.

Chapter IV

Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem of identifying children and screening them for the gifted program is one that has been an issue since the educational community established the criteria for eligibility. Ford and Harris (1992) report that "gifted students were also more likely to hold positive ideas and values about education and democracy. On the other hand, students not identified as gifted were less hopeful and less positive about these concepts" (p. 59). Schneider and Gervais (1991) report that the identification of students, at an early age, who are gifted, is important because it allows these children to experience fully their first years of education.

Regardless of when identification is done it is important to include all students who exhibit the characteristics of giftedness. The best means to include all students has been debated for a number of years and different states take different approaches. Recommendations from various departments of education and researchers in the field include referrals by peers, teachers and parents, case studies to appraise all referring individuals of the characteristics of giftedness and the use of appropriate screening instruments.

Burns et al. (1990) suggest that a screening process that was standardized and, therefore, consistent was an important aspect of identifying gifted preschool children. They reported that both teachers and parents were, to a large degree, not able to distinguish between gifted and non-gifted children of preschool age. The process that was recommended included educating the general public about characteristics of giftedness, a questionnaire and an individual screening.

Providing information to the general public was done through newspapers and magazine articles, television programming and group presentations in schools and in the community. The intent of the public education program was to provide specific details about gifted preschool children and the program that they attended, as well as to create interest in the community.

The general screening was done to locate those children who generally fit the characteristics of giftedness through parent and teacher questionnaires and applications. A parent rating scale that differentiated gifted from nongifted children was used. A teacher rating scale was done that was similar in content to the parent rating scale but also included opportunities for the teacher to list additional information about the child that suggested giftedness.

The individualized screenings helped to collect information about individual children and prepared the children for the individual intelligence testing if they passed the screening. Although a cut-off score was used to determine candidates for further evaluation, examiners could overrule the results of screening if they felt that the child did not exhibit their true abilities or if the results of the screenings were inconsistent with referring information.

Less standardized means of identifying giftedness in children are employed by some school districts in an attempt to identify children in rural areas (Howley & Howley, 1987). Some use subjective measures that evaluate children's leadership ability, creativity and academic success. Others use a variety of means to identify a number of criteria for eligibility in the gifted program. These included accepting the top 3% of students in the school, group testing to identify both achievement and the potential to achieve, setting local norms for gifted and placing children based on these norms.

In a handbook, created by the Virginia State Department of Education (1990) for parents of gifted students, specific information is provided. The handbook is designed to provide parents with information regarding characteristics, referral, screening and evaluation procedures. The handbook also provides a directory of resources for parents including organizations, publications, books and programs. Similar kinds of information are contained in an ERIC Digest (Whitmore, 1985).

Peer and teacher nominations were evaluated by Gagne (1993). Both groups were asked to evaluate students that they knew and describe them using a variety of forms. Students and teachers used six different peer nomination forms that used a model of giftedness and talent created by the author. These forms were revised down to three and administered to a subsample of the original sample of students. Although the study was directed at sex differences in aptitudes and talents of children, it used gifted characteristics as the underlying taxonomy.

The use of checklists as a means of identifying gifted children by both parents and peers is another approach that has support in the literature. Louis and Lewis

(1992) report that parents were good judges of their own children's gifted abilities, especially when a structured checklist was used. They were also able to identify characteristics of children who were gifted when more open-ended forms of questionnaires were used. Similarly, teachers and peers were able to identify gifted individuals using statements, case studies and descriptions of giftedness (Guskin et al. 1988; Gagne et al. 1993; Scott et al. 1992).

The use of a matrix system is another method for screening students. Scores are given to a variety of data. The data includes academic performance based on grades; results of standardized achievement tests; teacher and parent recommendations and checklists; peer nominations and portfolios of students work. Some researchers caution against the use of the matrix system because too many variables are at work and make the comparisons of students a difficult process (Richert, Rodedell and McDonnell, 1982). Balzer and Siewart (1990) suggest a case study approach to the matrix rather than a weighted system because the latter may put too much emphasis on information that is not as important as other data.

Another approach to improving the screening process is the training of teachers to recognize gifted characteristics in children. Kofsky (1992) presented a series of workshops in which teachers were trained to recognize not only the typical gifted child, but also the underrepresented, minority gifted child. The workshops included teachers, guidance personnel, administrators and some school psychologists. During the training, staff members were also instructed in the use and administration of screening instruments.

Carter (1989) approached the issue of screening from a different standpoint. Hoping to help parents understand the referral and gifted evaluation process better, a series of steps were taken that included parent meetings; consistent written communication between the school and parent and opportunities for parents to evaluate the entire process.

Scott et al. (1992), as part of their research on the identification of giftedness by parents, indicate that although parents are good evaluators of their children's giftedness it is possible to increase minority representation in these programs through more community awareness such as workshops and training sessions for parents. Saunders and Espeland (1986) write that although parents are accurate at predicting their children's future successes they are doubtful when told their children are potentially gifted. They supported advocacy for children at school in both proactive and reactive means to acquire more information about giftedness. They suggest common characteristics as well as means to acquire more information through organizations and associations.

Description of Selected Solutions

The literature as presented previously provides a number of solutions for increasing the number of students eligible for gifted programs. Some solutions are age specific to later elementary or middle school students. Some solutions relate to minority, rural or urban populations. The remaining solutions focus on parent and teacher education, involving large scale media campaigns for large populations.

Because the school that the practicum took place in is small, rural, with a highly mobile lower socioeconomic population, the writer chose to implement a solution that incorporated a variety of the methods reviewed in the literature.

To meet the goal that parents and teachers could exhibit an understanding of the characteristic of children who are gifted the writer developed a list of these characteristics and trained parents and school staff to recognize these characteristics. In doing so it was expected that both groups would make more appropriate referrals for screening and identification. Since both groups have the capacity and ability to make good judgments once they were provided with the appropriate information this could be an effective means of meeting the expected outcomes of at least a 5% referral rate for screening and a 2% identification rate for the gifted program at the school.

During the first five weeks the focus was on a series of meetings with staff and parents to provide information about gifted characteristics. The first meeting was with school staff to discuss the status of the screening and referral process and to elicit their support in improving the process. The next meeting was with the teacher of the gifted program to develop a list of characteristics of gifted children. The third meeting was with school staff to present the list of characteristics, discuss them in detail and have the teachers complete a pretest. The next step involved meeting with individual teachers to review potential screening referrals. During these meetings a list of all candidates for screening was developed. This list was to be used to invite parents of referred students as well as other interested parents to a

meeting to discuss gifted characteristics of their children and to review the screening and referral process.

At this point a list of all screening candidates was compiled. A committee of people that included the writer, the school guidance counselor and the teacher of the gifted program, met to select the most appropriate candidates for screening.

The writer met with the guidance counselor to accomplish a number of tasks. The test procedures were reviewed with the guidance counselor who did the actual screening using the OLSAT. The writer then met with the guidance counselor, the teacher of the gifted, and the teachers who referred students to compile a list of those students who went on to the individual intelligence testing with the writer.

The final phase of the implementation consisted of the individual evaluation of students using various intelligence tests administered by the writer. The final step was the evaluation of all results and the compilation of the Gifted Screening and Evaluation Log (Appendix C).

Report of Action Taken

The implementation of the practicum began with a series of meetings. The first meeting was with all the teaching staff at the school to discuss the referral and screening process, as it existed before the practicum, and to solicit the support of the staff to improve the process. Before implementing the practicum and while the problem was being researched the writer had met with many of the teachers. During discussions it became apparent that the teachers were eager to be involved in increasing the number of students identified as gifted.

During the second week the writer met with the teacher of the gifted program that served the school in which the practicum was conducted. Two meetings were held to create a list of characteristics that best described children who were gifted. The first meeting focused on the teacher's experiences with children who were already in the gifted program and those characteristics that a majority of the children exhibited. Also discussed were those characteristics that were not of high incidence but were just as significant in identifying children who were gifted.

The writer then compiled a rough draft of a list of characteristics from a variety of sources (Balzer & Siewart, 1990; Scott et al., 1992; Louis & Lewis, 1992; Gagne, 1993; Gagne et al., 1993; Guskin et al., 1988; Drons, 1989; Saunders & Espeland, 1986) including lists that the writer had acquired over the years from teachers in programs for the gifted. These lists had anonymous authors and therefore could not be credited with authorship. A review of all the statements about gifted children was done and a list of 30 positive and 15 negative statements was created from a list of 178 possible statements from all the sources used. Statements that had high incidences of occurrence in numerous sources were maintained. Statements that were of low incidence were included if they described a significant characteristic of gifted children, in the writer's experience.

The rough draft of the list of characteristics was shared with the teacher of the gifted program. Together a final list that totaled 24 characteristics was created (Appendix D). This list was also used as a recording device for both teachers and parents at later meetings.

The rough draft of the characteristics was also used to create a pretest and a posttest for the teachers at the school in which the practicum was done. The tests were made up of statements that were either true or false as applied to children who were gifted. A total of 35 statements were included in the tests (Appendix E).

During the third week a meeting with the teaching staff was held. The meeting was held to administer the pretest and to present the teachers with the list of characteristics that they were to use to make their recommendations for screening. Each of the characteristics was discussed in detail and questions were answered by the writer to clarify any concerns that the teachers had. The teachers were then asked to list those students that exhibited these characteristics. They were asked not to try to determine if each student was gifted. In meeting with teachers before the implementation of the practicum this was a concern. Teachers thought that they were expected to determine if children were gifted. Because they were unsure, based on the information that they had, if a student was gifted they tended to nominate only a few students. Many teachers did not nominate any students because of this perception and because they thought that they would be scrutinized for inappropriate nominations.

The nominations were reviewed by the writer and during the next week meetings were held with individual teachers to discuss their nominations. There was no attempt to influence their decisions about their nominations. Instead the focus was to clarify any further questions that they had about the characteristics list. These meetings also made it possible for the teachers to nominate other

students whom they were considering for nomination but needed either more time or more information to consider.

During this same week a list of possible candidates was compiled from the nominations done by the teachers. This was done by meeting with the guidance counselor and the teacher of the gifted program to solicit their perceptions of the children nominated. Since both of these people spent time in the classrooms with all the students in the school the writer felt that they could contribute valuable information to the nomination process.

Letters inviting the parents of children nominated for screening to a workshop were given to all of these children. This meeting was held during the next week. The focus of the meeting was to educate the parents about the characteristics that gifted children exhibited. The screening and referral process were also discussed. Parents were given the characteristics list that the teachers used (Appendix D) and asked to complete their copy of it, as the teachers had, about their children. The screening test and the various intelligence tests that would be used were also described and questions from parents were answered.

During the sixth week of the implementation the writer met with the guidance counselor and the teacher of the gifted program to review the list of those students nominated by both the teachers and parents. A final list of nominated students was compiled and the parents of nominated students were notified by letter.

The seventh week of the practicum included acquiring the screening test forms, meeting with the guidance counselor to discuss the screening test procedures

and instructions, and supervising the screenings that the guidance counselor did. Because two students that were nominated for screening were absent during the time scheduled for their testing it was necessary to extend the screening schedule by one week.

The ninth week of the practicum involved processing the results of the screenings. Included in the processing were discussions with the guidance counselor to review the test performance of students. This information related to individual students approach to the test situation, the speed with which they completed the test, questions that they asked and any signs of distress that they exhibited either before, after or during testing. These were important issues because they indicated any possible negative effects that could influence the test results. The screening tests were scored by the writer during this week. After the tests were scored a series of meetings were held. These meetings were with the guidance counselor, the teacher of the gifted program and the teachers who nominated students to inform them of the results and to answer any questions or concerns that they had. All the teaching staff were given the posttest to complete at this time. The list of students who were to be tested by the writer was compiled during this same week.

During the tenth week letters were sent to the parents of all the students who were screened, informing them of the results of the testing. Three different letters were sent. The first letter informed the parents that their child had successfully passed the screening and was eligible to be tested by the school psychologist (the writer). They were also advised of the procedure to be followed if they wished to have this testing done. The second letter was to the parents of those

children who had not passed the screening, but who were eligible to be tested anyway because of information provided by the guidance counselor, teaching staff or teacher of the gifted program. These parents were given the same opportunity to have their child tested and advised of the procedure for giving permission. The last letter was to the parents of those children who did not pass the screening and on whom there was no information that testing was warranted because of unusual circumstances. A congratulatory statement was included in each letter that informed the parents that selection for the screening indicated special qualities in their child.

During this same week individual testing sessions were scheduled and accomplished with some of the students who met the criteria for intelligence testing. Testing was to be accomplished within three weeks but because of the need to attend graduate course out of town for one week testing was interrupted. Testing was further extended because two students had to be rescheduled outside the expected time frame. A student that a teacher nominated, but who was not screened due to a misunderstanding on the writer's part, also had to scheduled and tested outside the expected schedule. The final week was spent writing reports, evaluating the results and compiling the Gifted Screening and Evaluation Log (Appendix C). The result was that the full practicum took 16 weeks to complete.

Chapter V

Results, Discussion and Recommendations

Results

The major goal of this practicum was to accurately identify elementary students who meet criteria for placement in the gifted program by improving the prereferral screening process through increased training for school staff, and parent education.

The first outcome expected was that teachers would increase their ability to identify giftedness in children. This was measured by comparing teachers' responses to 35 true and false questions that were given as a pre- and posttest. Each of the 23 teachers that were present during the initial presentation done by the writer completed the pretest. Their total responses numbered 805 (23 teachers X 35 questions). The group responded incorrectly a total of 242 times on the pretest. The result was that each teacher made an average of 9.5 errors. The range of errors was from 5 to 19. Twenty teachers completed the posttest and made a total of 187 errors (21 teachers X 35 questions). An average of 9.35 errors was made on the posttest. The range of errors was from 6 to 15. During the pretest the number of errors that occurred most often was 10 (5 times). During the posttest the number of errors that occurred most often was 7 (5 times). Table 2 contains a description of the number and occurrence of errors on both the pre- and posttest.

Table 2

Range of Teacher Errors

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Pretest	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	2	2	2	5	3	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Posttest	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	3	2	2	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0

The second outcome expected was that at least 5% of the school population would be referred for gifted screening. A total of 53 students were nominated by the teaching staff. When the practicum began there were 539 students. This resulted in a referral rate of 9.83% that exceeded the expected outcome.

The final outcome expected was that the number of appropriately identified and placed students in the gifted program would reflect at least 2% of the school population. The number of students that qualified was 10. This resulted in a 1.85% rate of qualifying when compared to the total school population. Though not the full 2% expected, it came very close.

There were some additional results revealed during this practicum. One of these was the incidence of scores that occurred during the screening process. A total of 46 students were screened during the practicum. Of this total 28 students scored between 90 and 109 on the screening test used, the OLSAT. Only 4 students scored at or above the required cutoff of 125 on the OLSAT. Table 3 lists a comparison of students' scores for the years 1991 through 1994. During this time period school psychologists have been permitted to use a lower cutoff point, based on individual judgment. The occurrence of a majority of scores appears to have shifted each year, almost consistently to the lower end.

Table 3

OLSAT Screening Scores

	1991	1992	1993	1994
75-79	1	1	1	0
80-89	3	1	0	0
90-99	6	5	3	15
100-109	9	3	16	13
110-119	9	0	8	9
120-129	3	2	5	6
130-139	1	0	3	2
140+	1	0	0	0

Another result was that at the same time that the majority of OLSAT scores were drifting down the majority of scores on the individual intelligence testing were drifting up towards the high end. Table 4 shows the incidence of intelligence test scores over the past four years.

Table 4

Intelligence Test Scores

	1991	1992	1993	1994
100-109	0	0	4	0
110-119	1	1	1	4
120-129	2	1	3	2
130-139	4	0	0	6
140+	1	0	0	2

Discussion

The results achieved during the implementation of this practicum indicate that accurately identifying elementary students who meet criteria for placement in gifted programs can be achieved by improving the prereferral screening process through increased training for school staff. Parent education, while done, did not produce any measurable results.

The first outcome expected was to increase the ability of teachers to identify giftedness in children. An analysis of the number of incorrect responses that teachers gave on a true-false questionnaire given as a pre and posttest indicated that there was a decline in errors. This decline was less than 1% (.98) overall but an analysis of Table 2 shows a shift downward in the range of teacher errors, from 5 teachers who made 10 errors on the pretest to 2 teachers who made 10 errors on the posttest. There were also no one who made more than 15 errors on the posttest as compared to 3 teachers who made 16 or more errors on the pretest. There were also declines in the number of teachers who made 11 and 14 errors on the posttest. Unfortunately there was an increase in the number of teachers who made 6, 7, 8, 12, and 14 errors. The decline in the number of errors overall could also be attributable to the fact that two teachers did not take the posttest. Because both the pre- and posttests were completed anonymously to allow teachers to answer freely, there was no way to determine which teachers did not do the posttest.

Although it appears that the first expected outcome was not met, some underlying positive outcomes did occur. For the first time, in the four years that the

writer was assigned to the school, all the staff actively participated in the prereferral process. Although it was not mandatory that they attend the training session, all staff members who were at school on the day of the workshop attended it. As part of the process all the staff present made nominations of students for screening. In the past 80% of the teachers did not refer students for screening.

A second related issue was that teachers reported that they felt more confident about referring students for screening. They were not asked to decide if students were gifted, only if they exhibited any of the characteristics of giftedness. This gave them the confidence to refer students without the possibility of being embarrassed in front of their colleagues when they made poor choices.

Special area teachers (art, music and physical education) also reported appreciating the opportunity to be more actively involved in the nomination process. In the past they were not always included in the process. As a result of being involved this time they felt that they were more a part of the teaching staff.

Parents who attended the parent's workshop reported that they learned more about their children, the school, the staff and giftedness. They also appreciated the opportunity to be more involved in their children's education. The workshop also gave them the chance to meet and talk with the parents of children like their own. Many had not known that there were possibly so many children who were perceived as being at least above average by their teachers.

The second expected outcome that at least 5% of the school population would be referred for gifted screening was exceeded. This was primarily because every teacher referred at least one student. In some cases teachers referred two or more

students. Because the special area teachers were involved they often duplicated the referrals of the classroom teachers.

The success of the nomination process can be best evaluated by looking at the scores of the students who were screened. Of the 45 students screened, 10 qualified for the gifted program. That means that 22% of those screened were eligible for the program. Because teachers listed those characteristics of giftedness that they saw in each student it was easier for the writer, guidance counselor and the teacher of the gifted program to evaluate the validity of the teacher nominations. In some cases the characteristics that teachers listed made the difference between being tested further or stopping at the screening. The weakness of the relationship between the screening device and the individual intelligence test was most evident in the cases of students whose OLSAT scores varied from their individual intelligence test scores by as much as 22 points. Drons (1989) reported similar results in his research. In that research it was not uncommon to find differences of 30 points between student's performance on group tests as opposed to individually administered tests. Table 5 lists the scores of those students who were screened and administered individual intelligence tests during the practicum.

Table 5

Group Versus Individual Test Results

Student	Group Test Score	Individual Test Score
1	123	144
2	119	130
3	135	135
4	118	117
5	119	130
6	125	113
7	115	130
8	138	140
9	120	131
10	123	114
11	127	127
12	----	133
13	124	123
14	134	115
15	141	133
16	121	---

Student #12 does not have a screening score listed because he was not screened. Because of a misunderstanding on the part of the writer it was not done. On the strength of the teacher's recommendation and the fact that she had already identified two other students who qualified for the gifted program it was decided to test him without the screening.

Student #16 does not have a score on the individual intelligence test because her parents decided that they did not want her to be tested after she was screened. Although there was strong evidence from two teacher recommendations, they wanted to wait another year before having this done. They felt that she might do better on the testing by waiting a year because she was a first grade student.

Although the final expected outcome, of having the number of children appropriately identified and placed in the gifted program reflect at least 2% of the school population, was not met, there were some positives. Ten students were found to be eligible and were placed in the gifted program. In the previous three years 11 students were found eligible using the previously reported methods. McCune (1984) reported that the incidence of giftedness in schools similar to the school at which the practicum was done is proportionately as high as in larger schools. This means that 2% of the school should be gifted. With the identification of this present group of children the population of children who are gifted at the school exceeds 3%.

Recommendations

The strategies that were used to create changes in the identification of gifted elementary school children were shown to be primarily effective during this practicum. There were some difficulties that impeded all the outcomes being realized fully. Considering these the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Modify the method of maintaining anonymity for teachers when collecting data on the pre- and posttest in order to be able to track responses and see change in individual learning.
2. Expand the list of parents invited to the parent's workshop to possibly increase the number of students referred.
3. Use the media to invite the community to attend the parent's workshop.
4. Expand the referral sources by including support staff (aides, volunteers, etc.).
5. Review referrals from previous years to determine if students not tested could be based upon teacher recollections of student characteristics.

Because this practicum was so well received by the school and parents the strategies and recommendations will be implemented in the future in all the schools that the writer serves.

Dissemination

Copies of this practicum will be distributed to various district personnel for their review. These people include the Director of Psychological Services, the Program Specialist for the Gifted Program, the four principals of the schools that the writer serves and members of the psychological staff who are interested in the practicum. The results have already been shared with some of the writer's colleagues who have shown an interest in the practicum.

It is also possible that the writer will be able to adapt this report to present at the next conference of the state association of school psychologists.

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APPENDIX A

GIFTED IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

GIFTED IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

Observation
(Teachers)
(Parents)
(Others)

↓

Nominations

↓

Group Screening
(Otis-Lennon)

↓

Referral Form Completed
(School Staff)

↓

Parent Permission

↓

Rating Scale
(Teacher)

↓

Individual Assessment
(School Psychologist)

↓

Staffing

APPENDIX B

CHARACTERISTICS CHECKLIST

Characteristics Checklist

Name_____ Birthdate_____ Grade_____

Student Number_____ School_____

Rating Scale: 4: almost all the time 3: frequently 2:sometimes 1: rarely or never

Applies thinking skills by:

1. Evaluating emotional/logical thinking. _____
2. Using inductive/deductive reasoning. _____
3. Identifying main ideas. _____
4. Making predictions. _____
5. Generating creative ideas. _____
6. Identifying problems. _____
7. Generating solutions to problems. _____
8. Evaluating ideas using specific criteria/standards. _____
9. Planning for idea implementation. _____
10. Using a variety of approaches, processes, ideas. _____

Demonstrates independent learning by:

1. Setting goals. _____
2. Using a step by step system to reach a goal. _____
3. Organizing materials logically. _____
4. Making logical choices. _____
5. Completing assignments. _____
6. Producing a high quality product. _____
7. Exhibiting good listening habits. _____
8. Speaking effectively. _____
9. Using an appropriate vocabulary. _____
10. Writing clearly/effectively. _____

Demonstrates personal skill competency by:

1. Recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses. _____
2. Recognizing individual rights. _____
3. Showing sensitivity to others. _____
4. Accepting responsibility for behavior. _____
5. Applying leadership abilities. _____
6. Contributing to successful group function. _____
7. Voluntarily seeking out activities of interest. _____
8. Enjoying activities chosen. _____
9. Acting consistently in accordance with internalized values. _____
10. Attending to what is being presented. _____

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Signature_____ Position_____ Date:_____

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APPENDIX C

GIFTED SCREENING AND EVALUATION LOG

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
GIFTED SCREENING AND EVALUATION
SPRING AND SUMMER, 1994

_____Year-round now (93-94)
_____Going year-round (94-95)
_____Traditional year (94-95)

Name of School: _____ Page____ of____
School Psychologist: _____

Screening Totals (complete one per school)
By Grade:

K = _____ 3 = _____ 6 = _____ 9 = _____
1 = _____ 4 = _____ 7 = _____ 10 = _____
2 = _____ 5 = _____ 8 = _____ 11 = _____

Total (PS+FS) _____ Total (PS+FS) _____ Total (PS+FS) _____

By School:

Total PS _____ Total FS _____
Total PP _____
Total NS _____
Total to Test (PS + PP + NS) _____

Student Name	Sex	Race	Grade	Track	OLSAT Score	PS	FS	PP	NS	S-B:IV CSAS	WPPSI-R FS IQ	WISC-III FS IQ

Race Codes: 1 = White, Non-Hispanic; 2 = Black, Non-Hispanic; 3 = Hispanic; 4 = Asian/Pacific Islander; 5 = American Indian

PS = Passed screening, referred for testing
FS = Failed screening, not referred for testing
PP = Passed screening previously (e.g., 125 or above on previous evaluation)
NS = Not Screened

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APPENDIX D

GIFTED CHARACTERISTICS CHECKLIST

GIFTED CHARACTERISTICS CHECKLIST

Please review this list. List below those students who exhibit any of these characteristics and put the number of those that apply to each student.

1. High verbal ability; discusses in elaborate detail.
2. Has complex thoughts and ideas.
3. Has in depth information about a large variety of topics.
4. Learns quickly and easily without repetition; retains information longer.
5. Constantly asks questions that are unusual, shows insight and/or relation to other experiences.
6. Finds solutions in different ways; uses common materials in innovative ways.
7. Sensitive to and aware of current events of global importance.
8. Has wild, silly ideas, but on questioning has logical explanations.
9. Often skeptical, questioning and challenging; can be critical of teachers.
10. Prefers adults and older children.
11. Doesn't enjoy routine, repetitive tasks, easily bored.
12. Prefers independent, individual tasks; can be a loner.
13. Can have a longer attention and concentration span than peers.
14. Reads well and about a number of subjects, or one subject to the extreme.
15. May exhibit daydreaming behaviors, but able to respond to questions when asked.
16. Can be highly critical of self; has high expectations.
17. Easily recognizes similarities, differences, and unusual situations.
18. Enjoys learning but can be unmotivated, produce little work and exhibit poor behaviors.
19. More independent than peers.
20. Prefers structure, organization and consistency.
21. Interested in cause and effect relationships.
22. Enjoys new learning and new ways of doing things.
23. Exhibits special skills unusual for age.
24. Excellent memory for information and able to make logical deductions using that information.

Student	Characteristics
1. _____	
2. _____	
3. _____	
4. _____	
5. _____	_____

Teacher: _____

APPENDIX E

TEACHER PRETEST AND POSTTEST

GIFTED CHARACTERISTICS

Pretest/Posttest

SSN# _____

Please mark the following questions True or False describing your beliefs about gifted children.

1. T___ F___ Get excellent grades (A's) in all major subjects. (Language Arts, Math, Science, etc.)
2. T___ F___ Have high verbal ability and can discuss in elaborate detail.
3. T___ F___ Usually complete all classwork and homework.
4. T___ F___ Read well about a number of subjects or one to a great degree.
5. T___ F___ Are highly critical of themselves (have high expectations).
6. T___ F___ Work well in groups.
7. T___ F___ Have wild, silly ideas.
8. T___ F___ Enjoy tests.
9. T___ F___ Are helpful to teachers and other students.
10. T___ F___ Have good attendance.
11. T___ F___ Constantly ask questions that are unusual.
12. T___ F___ Enjoy repetitive tasks.
13. T___ F___ Stay on task for extended periods.
14. T___ F___ Prefer to be alone and do independent tasks.
15. T___ F___ Have a great sense of humor - love to joke, pun and wisecrack.
16. T___ F___ Work hard.
17. T___ F___ Are the first to answer questions.
18. T___ F___ Copy work accurately.
19. T___ F___ Question teacher and rules.
20. T___ F___ Are good memorizers.
21. T___ F___ Enjoy physical education classes.
22. T___ F___ Have good penmanship.
23. T___ F___ Are sensitive to other's needs and to current events of global importance.
24. T___ F___ Learn to read early.
25. T___ F___ Enjoy school.
26. T___ F___ Enjoy being with peers.
27. T___ F___ Motivated by rewards from teacher or parent.
28. T___ F___ Have no behavior problems.
29. T___ F___ Can have learning disabilities.
30. T___ F___ Exhibit special skills, unusual for age.
31. T___ F___ Exhibit daydreaming behavior.
32. T___ F___ Find solutions in different ways using common materials.
33. T___ F___ Have limited areas of interests.
34. T___ F___ Prefer structure, organization and consistency.
35. T___ F___ Have complex thoughts and ideas.